



SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL OF SARASOTA COUNTY

Consensus

2010 Water Conservation and Low Impact Development Workshops

The Science and Environment Council of Sarasota County (SEC) developed its fourth series of workshops related to watersheds for policy and decision-makers. The two-part workshop took place in late May and early June 2010.

The workshops sought to forge an understanding among a diverse group of stakeholders regarding water conservation and low impact development. To this end, SEC invited a varied group of local government decision-makers in land use planning and water management, local water utility operators, civic leaders, developers, and the media. Both workshops represented a rich cross-section of expertise and opinions. This consensus document summarizes discussion, priorities, and proposed solutions. Workshop participants are invited to share this document to influence policy.

During the first workshop, participants heard about two local case studies regarding community-level water conservation as well as about Sarasota County's new Energy Economic Zone (EEZ).

- Suzanne Dameron, co-chair SCOPE-SEE Water Committee and Rob Wright, Sarasota County Environmental Services, presented the findings of a case study done in Pelican Cove and demonstrated how Pelican Cove may be an ideal microcosm of Sarasota County. The case study presentation covered concerns about usage, sourcing, and limitations of well and reclaimed water, in addition to the potential for rainwater harvesting and water demand reduction in Pelican Cove.
- Elaine Miller, Jack Burden, and Brad Main, Florida Waterscapes LLC, presented information about an LID redevelopment project in Englewood. The presentation included an outline of the problems and progress of the Dearborn street project, as well as an in-depth look at different green infrastructure and LID practices.
- Millard Yoder, Wilson Miller, described the emerging Energy Economic Zone (EEZ), including land use allocations and intensity, environmental impact (restoration/conservation/preservation), storm water plans, utilities, transportation/road plans (including accommodations for LEV/LHV's), green corridors, employment opportunities, and other LID strategies.

Following the presentations, workshop participants were split into two groups to discuss the question,

"What challenges and solutions are there to using LID in retrofit, redevelopment, or rezone?"

Highest priority challenges:

- The lack of political will to financially implement LID
- Financial incentives are not effective
- Loss of revenue to water utilities
- Changing the current dominant paradigm about water's worth (the "true value of water")
- Public acceptance of LID (new/different aesthetic)
- Costs of LID (especially premium up-front costs)

Solutions:

- Reconcile cost of LID with existing expenses for infrastructure
- Make LID part of comprehensive plan and land development regulations
- Define gains from LID and overcome perception that LID produces a bigger footprint
- Encourage people to conserve water by using tiered rates
- Use mailings to educate homeowners
- Create and promote general education events (such as E-Fest) and demonstrations to increase understanding about the true costs and value of water
- Show how rainwater harvesting will reduce the need for infrastructure (cost avoidance)
- Force candidates to address LID position
- Micro to Macro planning for LID incentives to reduce future infrastructure
- Link to green house gas reduction

The second day of the workshop began with presentations about how individuals (such as homeowners and realtors) can affect water conservation in Sarasota County, as well as a presentation from a civil engineer about local conservation initiatives.

- Annemarie Post, UF/IFAS Sarasota County Extension, discussed SB 2080 (the Senate Bill that frees property-owners of deed-restrictions and covenants that have prevented implementation of Florida Friendly Landscaping) and ways in which homeowner associations can help change water use.
- Lynn Nilssen, FGBC certifying agent, discussed the challenge of educating realtors and homebuyers about the benefits of purchasing homes with water conservation features and the challenges of green homes being marketed by realtors without an understanding of water conservation practices.
- Steve Suau, Progressive Water Resources, presented on water conservation initiatives and on partnering opportunities with the Water Alliance. The presentation focused on water conservation priorities, potable water conservation, the importance of considering supply and demand, best management practices (BMP), and quantifiable water conservation data.

Following the presentations on day two, workshop participants were split into two groups to discuss the question, "*What key influences will cause people to think differently about water?*"

Key influences:

- Education about the water-energy connection
- Education about environmental costs
- Education about cost-effectiveness of water conservation (including rainwater harvesting)
- Education about consumptive water use, in particular sharing the best practices of agriculture and golf courses with homeowners; examples of best practices include soil moisture sensors, water recycling, drought tolerant cultivars, micro jet irrigation, row-crop drip irrigation, tailwater recovery, nutrient management, among others
- Water allocations (teach people to prioritize use)
- Better understanding of natural capital
- Decrease supply during droughts
- Provide more opportunities to access Sarasota Bay and the Gulf of Mexico; by having opportunities to enjoy the water, people will become passionate about conservation
- Limit or prohibit use of potable water for irrigation
- Finely tune a tiered rate structure to adjust base rate for super conservers; research where to set brackets to get the most conservation

The Science and Environment Council of Sarasota County is a collaboration of nonprofit and government organizations that operate or support conservation and science-based facilities with environmental missions. SEC's mission is to promote and advocate science, conservation, and environmental issues.

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